

# Reserve Component Soldiers as Peacekeepers



Dr. Ruth H. Phelps

## Foreword

Research and development to increase the readiness and deployability of Reserve Component (RC) soldiers has been a long-standing program area of the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI). There is currently increased interest in utilizing the RC to support the increased operational tempo of U.S. forces as the size of the Active Component (AC) and defense budgets have declined. One of the new strategies being developed is to use RC soldiers to augment or replace AC soldiers. ARI assisted the Chief of Staff of the Army to test this concept using one of America's oldest peacekeeping commitments: the Egyptian-Israeli border in the Sinai.

The Chief of Staff's concept was modeled after the World War I "Rainbow Division" in which National Guard soldiers from across the country were formed into the 42nd Division under AC leadership. The research described in this book provides the results of an intensive 2-year assessment of a mixed AC/RC battalion used to fulfill the U.S. peacekeeping commitment in the Sinai. In addition to its expertise in the RC, ARI drew on its institutional capabilities in recruiting and selection, training, economic/life course impacts, family support, leadership, and cohesion. Our experience in personnel performance and training research with previous and ongoing peace missions provided an invaluable context for understanding the degree to which our findings will validly apply to other missions.

The research findings support the use of RC volunteers for the peacekeeping mission in the Sinai. Qualified RC soldiers volunteered, the unit successfully performed the mission, the families throughout the country were supported, and the RC unit from which most of the volunteers were drawn experienced only temporary decreases in readiness and a consistent increase in morale.

Our purpose for organizing this research into a book and this companion Executive Summary is to make it accessible to military and academic audiences. We hope the military will continue to use these findings to inform decisions and policies about new roles and missions for the RC. We hope academia will benefit from the theoretical interpretation as well as theoretical expansion.

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## RESERVE COMPONENT SOLDIERS AS PEACEKEEPERS<sup>1</sup>

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Recent reductions in military strength, combined with increased demands for U.S. participation in peace missions, have caused the Army to consider new options for meeting its international commitments. One option is to use the Reserve Component (RC) for missions currently performed by the Active Component (AC). In 1993, the Chief of Staff, Army (CSA) directed the Army to test the feasibility of recruiting qualified RC volunteers, forming them into a battalion, and deploying them on the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) peacekeeping mission on the Israeli-Egyptian border in the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt. The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) and the University of Maryland were called upon to conduct an assessment of this test. The results of the ARI assessment are highlighted in this Executive Summary to the full report *Reserve Component Soldiers as Peacekeepers*. The University of Maryland assessment is summarized in *Citizen Soldiers in the Sinai* by Segal and Segal, forthcoming.

<sup>1</sup>This report is intended as an executive summary to the 1996 book *Reserve Component Soldiers as Peacekeepers* edited by R. Phelps and B. Farr. The book is available from the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 5001 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22333

### The Bottom Line

Mission performed successfully  
No performance problems due to AC/RC mix  
No show-stopper problems



**Impact on RC Home Unit:** *Unit morale increased; unit can compensate for small temporary losses in personnel.*

- Limit the number of soldiers taken from individual battalions by drawing from the largest volunteer pool practicable.
- Capitalize on the morale benefits of sponsoring a special mission such as the MFO.



Figure 1. According to the Protocol only limited military presence is permitted in Zones A, B and D. The MFO covers the entire Zone C stretching from the Mediterranean in the north to the Red Sea in the south.

The MFO was created as a neutral organization to observe and report violations to the Egyptian-Israeli Treaty of Peace (1979) resulting from the Camp David Accords. As part of its contribution to the MFO, the United States has deployed an

infantry battalion for 6-month rotations to the Sinai continuously since 1982. This battalion has the peacekeeping responsibility for the area of operation in the southern third of the Sinai bordering the strategic Gulf of Aqaba and the Strait of Tiran, as shown in Figure 1. Squads typically spend 3 weeks at a remote observation/control site, 3 weeks at base camp, then rotate back to the same remote site. An example of a remote site that has responsibility for observing both the desert and the Red Sea is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Remote observation post overlooking the Gulf of Aqaba and the Sinai desert.

The test battalion (the 28th Rotation) was activated on 4 November 1994 and deactivated on 28 July 1995 as the 4-505 Parachute Infantry Regiment of the 82nd Airborne Division. It consisted of 80% RC and 20% AC. Officer and Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) positions were divided equally between the two components, leaving nearly all junior enlisted positions to be

**Training Procedures and Tasks:** *Soldiers were well trained and conducted a successful mission.*

- Shorten the predeployment training time by focusing soldier and leader training on peacekeeping tasks only.
- Delete the ILC and build cohesion using peacekeeping training.
- Use job knowledge tests and supervisor rating scales for diagnostic and competency testing.
- Develop unit measures of peacekeeping performance to complement the existing individual soldier measures.
- Add or reorient training to include command and control synchronization. Consider using simulations and simulators.

**Attitudes and Perceptions:** *Cohesion was high, but morale declined.*

- Train leaders to recognize conditions of peacekeeping that lead to morale problems, e.g., boredom and isolation.
- Make leaders aware of negative morale effects caused by micromanagement, both their own and higher/lower echelons.
- Set more realistic soldier expectations by increasing the frequency and accuracy of information during recruiting and reinforce during training.

**Family Support System:** *Combined AC/RC system was successful.*

- Keep family support a high priority.
- Keep family support providers as geographically close to families as possible and maximize use of existing state family assistance programs.
- Improve accuracy of information on family addresses and telephone numbers.

as the peacekeeping mission's sponsor and 90% of junior and senior leaders endorsed future participation in similar missions.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We conclude that the use of RC soldiers for the MFO mission can be a successful strategy for meeting U.S. overseas military peacekeeping commitments. Although the conclusions and recommendations listed below were derived from the MFO mission, we believe they will generalize to other missions to the extent that such missions are similar in their situation stability, force complexity, and degree of threat. For example, as discussed in more detail in the full book (Chapter 17), because the 1996 conditions in Macedonia are more similar to those in the Sinai, the findings for forming RC volunteers into a single unit will validly apply in Macedonia. The conditions in Bosnia, however, are less similar and therefore the findings will apply to a lesser degree. The primary conclusions and recommendations are:

### Personnel: *Enough qualified RC soldiers volunteered.*

- Maintain more frequent communication with volunteers about their status in the recruiting and selection process.
- Identify in advance the conditions, opportunities, and benefits of volunteering, and present them in writing to all volunteers, regardless of component, unit, or location.
- Budget for morale telephone calls (at least one call home per month without charge to the soldier).

filled by RC soldiers, as shown in Figure 3. Although this test unit was to perform the same mission to the same standards as those of previous all-AC units, it needed a different approach to team building, training, and family support. In addition, because this was the first test of a composite AC/RC unit performing such an important international mission, this unit had to cope with considerable media coverage and a large number of visiting dignitaries.

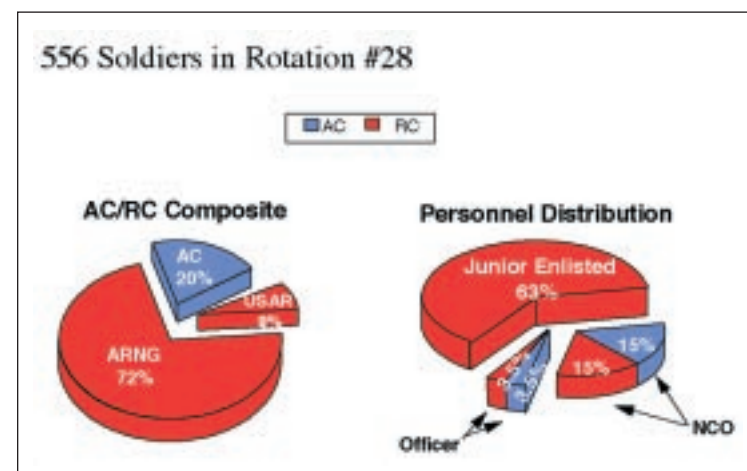


Figure 3. Rotation 28 was composed of 80% RC and 20% AC; half of the NCO and officer positions were AC, leaving nearly all junior enlisted slots to be filled by RC soldiers.



## ASSESSMENT AREAS AND METHOD

ARI's research assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of five areas: personnel, training, attitudes and perceptions, family support and the RC home unit impact. Within each area we researched the following topics:

- **Personnel:** the recruiting and screening process of volunteers, their demographics, reasons why they volunteered, and their expectations of the peacekeeping experience.
- **Training:** the types of tasks trained, the length and sequence of training, and soldiers' job knowledge following training.
- **Attitudes and Perceptions:** unit cohesion, morale, and impact of volunteering for the deployment on soldiers' civilian and military lives.
- **Family Support:** the system put in place to support families located across the country and how serving in the Sinai affected the quality of soldiers' marriages.
- **RC Home Unit Impact:** the personnel, training, and readiness changes that occurred in the 29th Infantry Division (Light) (29th ID[L]) as a result of losing soldiers to the MFO mission.

As shown in Figure 4, these five areas were examined using a longitudinal case study method in which soldiers in the test battalion were tracked throughout the activation period. During this time, we surveyed and/or interviewed soldiers, leaders, trainers, and spouses. We measured job proficiency using supervisor ratings and soldiers' scores on job knowledge tests. We visited the test unit to collect these data three times during predeployment and twice during Sinai deployment. In addition,

Interviews and survey responses from soldiers and spouses showed that they used family and non-Army friends as their primary means of support and problem solving. Most of the spouses who did use the Army's family support system found problems resolved to their satisfaction. However, soldiers seemed more concerned about marital quality than spouses and even reported that this worry affected their morale and job performance in the Sinai.

### *Home Unit Impact*

Unlike the research areas that focused on soldiers who deployed to the Sinai and their spouses, this last area assessed the impact of the peacekeeping mission on the 29th ID (L). This division was administratively responsible for the RC portion of the mission and contributed most of the test battalion's volunteers. We surveyed (twice) and interviewed (once) 71 senior leaders from the 9 contributing infantry battalions within the division. We also surveyed 875 junior leaders and soldiers from these same battalions.

Senior leaders initially reported a negative impact on their combat readiness and training, with those leaders who lost more troops reporting greater impacts. By the time volunteers had returned to their units after deactivation, however, these same senior leaders reported the impact on their combat readiness and training to be actually positive. In addition, 73% of the senior leaders reported that the volunteers returned better trained than before they had left.

In contrast, sponsorship of the peacekeeping mission had a consistently positive effect on the division's morale. Both senior and junior leaders reported there was an increase in morale in the unit and that the volunteers themselves returned with enhanced morale. It appears that the unit was proud to be selected

predeployment and deployment period in the number of RC soldiers who reported that they would volunteer again (36% decrease) or would remain in the military (26% decrease). This drop was the result of discrepancies in soldier expectations that were formed during the recruiting/assignment process and what was actually experienced once on duty. Educational opportunities, for instance, were fewer and costs were higher than the RC soldiers anticipated. In addition, some AC soldiers believed that this assignment would count as an overseas unaccompanied short tour.

We did find that soldiers who volunteered for patriotic reasons tended to have higher mission motivation, morale, and squad cohesion than soldiers who volunteered for monetary reasons. However, morale differences were not related to the soldier's component, demographic background, previous experience overseas, or how long before reporting for duty the soldier had volunteered.

### *Family Support*

Although only 30% of the test battalion's RC soldiers were married (compared to 59% of the AC soldiers), their families were scattered across 26 states. Supporting these families would be difficult for the standard AC system because 44% of RC families lived more than 50 miles from any AC military installation. The solution implemented by this test battalion was a system that energized existing combined AC and RC assets to support the volunteer families. For example, ARNG family coordinators were notified of any families in their states and then provided with special MFO information to assist these families. In addition, the Battalion Commander made family support a high priority and assigned an ARNG family support NCO to the rear detachment as a full-time family assistance officer.

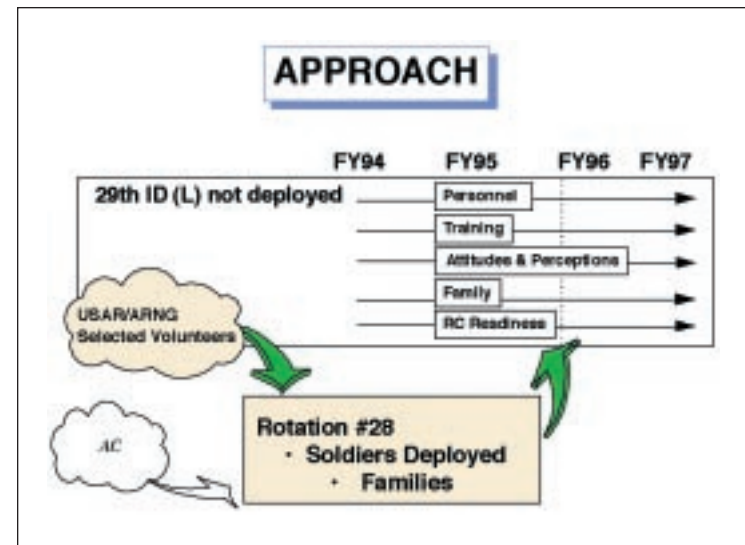


Figure 4. Rotation 28 RC soldiers and families were studied prior to reporting for duty in 1994, during deployment and post redeployment through 1997. Note that the 29th ID (L) soldiers who did not deploy were studied over the same time frame.

we gathered comparable data from prior all-AC rotations where possible.

## **FINDINGS**

### *Personnel*

All required 446 RC slots were filled with volunteer soldiers meeting the physical and performance standards set by the Army. These soldiers came from 35 states, with the majority (53%) coming from the Maryland and Virginia Army National Guard



(ARNG) (29th ID[L]) where recruiting was initially focused. Forty-five percent were employed full time, 25% were either employed part-time or in school, and 20% were unemployed. Only 35% of the RC volunteers were married. Most RC soldiers said they volunteered for a challenging and adventurous way to serve their country and/or to enhance their military careers. Eighty-one percent of RC soldiers intended to take educational courses while in the Sinai, and 97% planned to travel for recreation.

Despite the overall success in acquiring qualified volunteers, we found that 3 weeks prior to the report-for-duty date, 39% of the RC soldiers who had initially volunteered were subsequently unable to report, primarily because they were not sure they had actually been accepted as volunteers or, they had been notified too late in the recruitment process. Citizen soldiers must take into account the needs of their employers, military units, and families when deciding to volunteer for extended overseas missions. As a result, we found that it is likely that a significant number of soldiers who volunteer several months before a mission may not be available at the reporting date, unless clear and frequent communication between the volunteers and the Army is maintained throughout the recruiting period. The “good news” is that the 39% shortfall was filled within the remaining 3 weeks by fully qualified soldiers from around the country who were able to volunteer on short notice.

### ***Training Procedures, Tasks, and Performance***

We tracked which tasks were trained, how well they were performed, and the soldiers’ and trainers’ evaluation of the training that was conducted during predeployment and overseas deployment. The 3 months of training received by the test battalion soldiers during predeployment was comparable to that received by a recent all-AC battalion before its arrival in the

Sinai. However, an additional 2 months were spent training the test battalion’s leaders both in garrison and at the Infantry Leaders Course (ILC) at Fort Benning.

Tests were specially developed to measure each soldier’s knowledge of common soldiering tasks and MFO peacekeeping-specific tasks. Test battalion scores collected just prior to deployment were comparable to those obtained from an all-AC prior rotation. However, during the deployment itself, the test battalion concentrated on peacekeeping-specific tasks, whereas the prior all-AC rotation decreased its training on these tasks and increased its emphasis on warfighting tasks. Because the test battalion was to be deactivated following the MFO mission, there was no need to prepare for a follow-on assignment as a unit, and thus, their training was focused largely on peacekeeping tasks. Content analyses of the predeployment training showed that the ILC could be shortened or replaced by training that emphasized more peacekeeping tasks and fewer infantry tasks.

### ***Perceptions and Attitudes***

The attitudes and perceptions soldiers hold about each other, their leadership, other components, the mission itself, and the Army in general can affect mission performance, soldier willingness to volunteer for other missions, and commitment to remain in the Army. Therefore we examined soldier morale, unit cohesion, fulfillment of expectations, and the impact of the deployment on their civilian and military lives.

Even though this unit had not previously served together, their unit cohesion was comparable to that of a prior all-AC rotation. High unit cohesion was built early in the predeployment training and remained high throughout deployment in the Sinai. There was a drop in soldier morale, however, and a significant decline over the